

**Gloria Duquette  
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**February 16, 2017  
DSS Nursing Home funding**

Dear members of the Appropriations Committee,

My name is Gloria Duquette and I live in Hartford. I have been a Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) for 11 years and I am a member of District 1199/SEIU Healthcare.

I am here tonight to say “THANK YOU” to the Appropriations Committee for your support for nursing home workers in 2015, and to urge you to fully fund nursing home care in 2017 so we don’t undo that economic progress we made.

In 2015, I -- and many other nursing home workers -- testified about the low wages for front-line workers in Connecticut’s nursing homes. This committee included funding in its budget specifically targeted to provide a wage enhancement for nursing home workers. That funding was included in the final budget, and I am here tonight to say “thank you” because it changed my life.

Two years ago, my each of my three jobs paid me less than \$15 an hour. Today, with the help of the wage enhancement funding, I’m almost there -- I am now paid \$14.88 per hour at each of my two nursing home jobs. Because of these increases, I’ve finally been able to begin to pay off some of my debt and to repair my credit. I’ve even been able to set aside \$16 a week for a Christmas fund to be able to buy presents for my kids and grandkids.

But it's not just about me, we also raised the bottom – new CNAs who come to work at Kimberly Hall will now start off at a living wage of \$14.75 instead of \$12.98. And after so many years of struggle, we now have a retirement pension so that someday we can retire in dignity!

I'm here today to thank you for your past support, and to ask you to please help to ensure that your work is not undone. The Governor's budget proposes to not re-base nursing home rates. If that state funding doesn't keep up with inflation, then the nursing homes come looking for cuts to our staffing levels and pay. Funding for nursing home care must keep pace with inflation and the cost of living in order to ensure that what you provided for with the wage enhancement bill doesn't slowly begin to erode.

Thanks to you, the thousands of healthcare workers in the state of Connecticut have been able to move forward and are better able than they were two years ago to care for their own needs and the needs of their families. Let's keep moving Connecticut forward.